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United States Department of Agriculture,

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Office of Grain Investigations

WASHINGTON, D. C.

BLACKHULL KAFIR

(A form of *Andropogon sorghum*.)

Blackhull kafir, like other kafir varieties, was brought originally from south-east Africa. It is of an erect and stocky habit, never lodging, 4½ to 6 feet tall, including the long, erect head. The oval seeds are white and the hulls black. In drought resistance it is almost equal to milo, though not so early, and hence adapted to only the lower Plains region, from Kansas to southern Texas and westward to California. Yields of 25 to 45 bushels to the acre are secured on the plains of western Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas.

Planting.—This kafir, like other sorghums, should not be put in until the soil is warm and danger of frost is past, usually about the same time as for planting corn. Seed may be planted with any ordinary corn planter, using special plates, having smaller holes than the corn plates. The rows should be from 36 to 42 inches apart. The proper distance between stalks in the row will vary with the kind of soil and available moisture. Our best yields at Amarillo, Tex., have been secured where the stalks have averaged slightly less than two per foot of row, or one stalk for every 6 to 8 inches of row space. This requires not over 4 pounds of seed per acre.

Cultivation.—The cultivation of Blackhull kafir should be much as for corn. One or two harrowings while the plants are small and at least two good cultivations at later dates are required. Additional cultivations will usually be repaid.

Harvesting.—Kafirs should not be harvested for grain until the heads are thoroughly mature. This takes rather longer than in some other varieties, because the stalks are more juicy than in milo, the durras, and kowliangs. They may be cut with the corn binder and cured in the shock. It is possible to cut them a row at a time with the grain binder, but the large, sappy stalks are too heavy for the successful use of this machine. The heads may be cut from the stalks in the field with the row header, or, if the crop is not too tall, the grain header is well adapted for harvesting them. From small areas the heads are often cut by hand.

Thrashing.—Like all grain sorghums, kafir varieties may be thrashed in an ordinary grain separator. To prevent cracking the seed, part of the concaves may be replaced by boards or part of the teeth may be removed from the concaves and cylinder. The speed of the cylinder should also be reduced about one-half. If the grain is to be used solely for feeding purposes it does not matter how much it is cracked, because it is preferably cracked or ground before feeding. Cracked seed is worthless for planting.

Feeding.—Kafir grain is nearly equal to corn in feeding value. It is adapted to feeding to all classes of stock and makes a specially desirable poultry food. In feeding to hogs, cattle, and horses it is customary to coarsely grind the grain in order to promote more complete digestion. This ground product is known as kafir chops. There is a growing practice of grinding the whole heads of kafirs and milo, thus making what are called head chops, which are comparable to corn-and-cob meal.

Seed selection.—Selections should be made in the field before the crop is entirely ripe, especially where it is desired to select for earliness. The heads on early and uniform stalks of medium height should be chosen. Do not select the largest heads unless the stand is good. Select from the stalk that produces the largest head with the smallest row space. Do not select from suckers and in general avoid stalks which produce suckers. All hybrids should be removed from the plats before harvest, and, if possible, before flowering, in order to prevent crossing.

Suggestions.—Your cooperative test is of great value not only to us but to you and your part of the State. Give your plat no less and no more than good field care, but keep accurate records of dates and yields. When the experiment has been completed by the thrashing and weighing of the grain, send in your report, with 2 or 3 pounds of the seed. We reserve the right to call for as much seed as we furnish you. This crop should be carefully compared for earliness, drought resistance, yield, etc., with other grain sorghums and corn grown in your neighborhood.





